

# Ecclesiastes 11:9-10

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/eccl/eccl-11/ecclesiastes-119-10/>

*Solomon exhorts young men to live joyfully and responsibly while at the height of their energy—investing wisely and making the most of every opportunity, knowing God will evaluate every aspect of life.*

Solomon now speaks directly to a *young man*. It would seem The Preacher ([Ecclesiastes 1:1](#)) has now started a “children’s” sermon.” He exhorts the *young man* to *rejoice during his childhood*. Have fun. Enjoy life. But don’t just stop there. Solomon tells the *young man* to *let his heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood*. During days where responsibilities are light and energy is high, the *young man* is told to enjoy life to the fullest.

However, in all the choices the *young man* makes while enjoying life, he should bear in mind that there are consequences for his actions. There are consequences that extend even into eternity. For *God will bring the young man to judgment for all the things* he chooses to do. God gives us the amazing power to choose our actions. But when we choose our actions, we need to realize they are an investment that will yield an outcome. God will judge our actions at the end of our life.

This passage indicates that one thing God will judge is whether we enjoyed life. [1 Timothy 6:17](#) tells us that God “richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.” It seems reasonable that we will have to answer to God for not enjoying all aspects of life God granted to us.

This harkens back to the underlying paradox of Ecclesiastes. The *young man* can *rejoice* when he secures his reason and decisions on the firm foundation of faith, seeing *God* both as a just *God* who will bring all things into *judgment*, as well as a loving *God* who desires us to enjoy life. Alternatively, if the *young man* views life from the shaky foundation of his capacity for reason and experience, he will ultimately end up in a vaporous stew of madness and futility.

Since God has given life and circumstances for us to enjoy, Solomon advises the *young man* to *remove grief and anger from his heart*. Sometimes circumstances bring pain. And often there is nothing we can do about it. But one choice we do have is whether to dwell upon the circumstance that

brought us *grief* or *anger*. We have a choice to refuse to be defined or controlled by any circumstance. Solomon advises that we not allow pain to dominate our heart. One of the best ways to *remove grief and anger* from our *hearts* is to replace it with gratitude for other things.

That we are told to *remove grief and anger* from our *heart* suggests that *grief and anger* are present. Indeed, the *young man* (and each of us) can invite both grief and anger at any time, depending upon how we choose to look at things. *Grief and anger* need to be dealt with, not ignored. The word translated *pain* in the phrase *put away pain from your body* could also be translated “evil.” So this could be taken as advice to avoid evil. To run away. To shun. Whereas we must address grief and anger by taking them in their proper context, we should avoid evil altogether. In part, because we have the *judgment of God* in view.

In addition to putting away *grief and anger* from our *heart*, Solomon advises the *young man* to *put away pain from his body* as well. Once again, the word translated *pain* occurs frequently in the Old Testament and is almost always translated “evil” or “wickedness.” This seems to fit the context better, as the youth is exhorted to enjoy life while bearing in mind the coming *judgment*, which would lead the youth to shun evil while fully enjoying the bounties of life God has granted.

Time is limited, both *childhood and the prime of life are fleeting*. So it is important to enjoy life while we can. Most things in life that affect us are beyond our control. We have no choice about when we are born, our height, who we are related to, or most other circumstances. But God leaves to us the responsibility to choose our perspective. And Solomon urges the young to learn to choose a perspective to enjoy life by embracing what is. True enjoyment requires that we not be captured by circumstances of *grief and anger*, nor be lured into evil, which leads to slavery and loss ([Romans 6](#)).

Solomon ends this passage by noting that *childhood and the prime of life are fleeting*. The word translated *fleeting* is our old friend “hebel.” So it could be translated “vapor” or “mystery.” But *fleeting* is a good translation, for vapor is only there for a moment. You try to grab it and it is gone. So is the span of our lives. The New Testament book of James uses this same illustration to refer to our entire lifespan, saying it is like a “wisp of vapor” ([James 4:14](#)). James was Jewish and could have gotten his illustration of the brevity of life from this verse; our lifespan is “hebel.”

**Biblical Text:**

**<sup>9</sup> Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes. Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things. <sup>10</sup> So, remove grief and anger from your heart and put away pain from your body, because childhood and the prime of life are fleeting.**